

BUCK GODOT zap gun for hire

Thursday, October 18, 2007

THE HERODOTUS COMPLEX: NOTES BY P'OILGOF LIVY

1. Our Story So Far:

The Great Solar Flare, which occurred in the 21st Century, caused the collapse of civilization on Earth. All things considered, this was not as grievous a tragedy as some would believe. It was eventually rebuilt by **The Antarctic Subterranean Nation**, which made substantial improvements.

Subsequently, Humanity spread out into space, encountering a plethora of intelligent alien life forms along the way. Earth's sector of the galaxy is governed by a coalition known as The **Gallimaufry**. Humanity gained full membership after passing the initiation ritual, which consisted of the chief ambassador hopping on one foot while singing: "I Wish They All Could Be Flexihedron Girls." The Gallimaufry does not take itself terribly seriously.

Humanity, however, still had some tendencies (such as the exploitation of pre-spaceflight civilizations) which one did not discuss in polite company. After a particularly distasteful episode, Humanity found itself placed under the stewardship of a terribly powerful being with no appreciable sense of humor known as **Lord Thezmothete**. Although they tried to hide it, the Gallimaufry was as surprised at Thezmothete's existence as Humanity was.

Another unfortunate human quirk was the fighting of civil wars. These had nothing to do with acceptable feeding, mating or decorating frenzies, and, in the process, wasted perfectly good planets. This caused some cosmic busybody to create the **Law Machines**, an excessively efficient robotic police force with which there was no arguing.

The Gallimaufry as a whole is waiting with bated breath for the Next Great Check upon Humanity. When paid off, the bets involved will probably disrupt economies along the entire spiral arm.

Even so, the Law Machines are not infallible. The human planet **New Hong Kong**, managed to circumvent The Law before it became established. As a result, it is a very attractive location for those sentients who chafe under any sort of imposed authority and/or have a death wish. But make no mistake: "no laws" does *not* mean "no *rules*."

Thursday, January 03, 2008

THE HERODOTUS COMPLEX: NOTES BY P'OILGOF LIVY

Chapter 2; Cultural Trade:

Aliens are, by their very nature, alien. Fatuous as this statement sounds, it is one of the strengths of the Gallimaufry. There are ideas, indeed, entire basic concepts that we take for granted; such as, say, representational art. In many cases, these concepts may simply never have occurred to another race that has, throughout its entire existence, felt a deep-seated need for a picture of its mother, only without those annoying tendrils that no polite person ever mentioned anyway.

Ostensibly the Gallimaufry serves as a trading center for concrete goods and services. Even so, one of the real reasons races stay is the realization that there are wonderful things to be learned from those other races, even those annoying fellows with entirely too many ears. Things that, once explained, one can do ones self for free. To be sure, this annoys some of the races that have brought some of these wonderful ideas to the Galaxy's notice; such as the Choaten, who tried and failed to patent the concept of blue as a source of nutrition. Happily, most races realize that since there are more of "Them" throwing ideas around than there are of "Us", you tend to get more out of it than you brought into it. This is a universal concept that appeals to everybody.

When Humanity joined the Gallimaufry, the first impressions of established idea sifters were rather disappointing. Yes, they were entertainingly crazy, but their quirks were mere amplifications of other neuroses and psychoses that had been in and out of vogue for millennia.

Then it was revealed that humans froze liquids. No big news there. The concept that electrified the Gallimaufry was that Humans stuck a handle into the frozen liquid and *ate* it! *Still frozen!*

Shockwaves of tsunami-like proportion ran through the culinary schools of the galaxy. Entire industries were spawned and fought over, and at least two desert dwelling races were saved from extinction.

And most important of all, when Humanity threw a party with refreshments, *everybody* came.

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

THE HERODOTUS COMPLEX: NOTES BY P'OILGOF LIVY

Chapter 3; The Winslow:

The Winslow is a small, green, fuzzy, reptilian creature measuring 66 centimeters from nose to tail. It possesses a rudimentary intelligence and is capable of speech, although one might as well not bother listening. The Winslow is indestructible and immortal. It is also the main focus, or at

least a major component of, three quarters of the known religions existing in the Gallimaufry.

The preceding statements are all that is really *known* about the Winslow. Upon this bare framework have been hung the combined irrationalities of the known Galaxy.

The Winslow is worshipped, hated, adored and feared with an intensity that sentient usually reserve for that final five minutes before their sun goes nova.

This depth of feeling is all the more incomprehensible, as the Winslow does not vanquish evil, provide a code of ethics, heal the afflicted, blight the crops, convert the heathen, call down the lightning, corrupt the innocent, eat the moon, answer the phone before it rings, or indeed, display *any* of the fourteen Accepted Signs of Divinity. (Except, of course, for number fourteen itself, which is: "Be The Winslow.")

There are endless reasons given why the Winslow is so singularly regarded, but a depressingly large number of these have a circular aspect to them that quickly makes one's head throb: "The Winslow is divine because it is the same size, color and shape as the Perfect Lizard of Love, which incidentally, is the Winslow."

When all of that sort of reasoning is sifted out, we are left with these three facts:

1. The Winslow is indestructible. (This is impressive.)
2. The Winslow is apparently immortal. (This is unproven, but at this point seems to be a pretty safe bet, and is also impressive to those races that die.)
3. Everybody *else* thinks it's pretty damn important.

It is this last that is the Winslow's greatest asset.

Everybody in the Galaxy has been told that the Winslow is this amazing being, which *everybody* should want, or at the very least keep anybody else from having. Take this to its illogical extreme and you get religious hysteria, interplanetary jihads, unspeakable genetic experiments, et cetera, which is not conducive to Business As Usual.

Naturally, if you wanted to put a stop to this nonsense, your best bet would be to go to the most advanced, powerful, and supremely logical beings you could find, show them the wretched creature, and hope that once they had a good laugh, would talk a little sense into everybody else in an enlightened, superior being sort of way.

This might even have worked, except that our local omnipotent superbeings, The Prime Movers, declare that the Winslow is the most important being in creation.

They refuse to say why, but do mention that it is not for *any* of the reasons anyone *thinks* it is.

This is this sort of enigmatic, condescending and totally useless statement that makes a large majority of the scientists and philosophers of the Gallimaufry yearn to pound the Prime Mover's ever-so-superior head in with a large cosmic tire iron.

Thursday, May 29, 2008

THE HERODOTUS COMPLEX: NOTES BY P'OILGOF LIVY

Chapter 4; The Universal Ninja Puzzle:

On Old Earth, societies arose in which the ruling elite forbade their lower classes the right to carry weapons. Those that did not tended to acquire new rulers, usually from among the lower classes. As these lower classes often found themselves in situations where having a weapon would be A Good Thing, combat systems were developed that required either no weapons at all, or utilized "harmless" objects such as farming equipment. This worked surprisingly well. In addition, it was discovered that practitioners could develop an enhanced mental state which vastly increased the effectiveness of the fighter, as well as making him an overall better person. (At least in his own mind.)

Perhaps the most versatile system on Old Earth was that of ninjustu, which was developed for military spies in feudal Japan and, aside from the more general lessons in archery, swordsmanship, unarmed combat, the use of artillery and firearms and swimming in armor, also included training in disguise, escape, concealment, geography, meteorology, medicine, explosives, and avoiding rust.

One of the more amazing discoveries made by galactic sociologists is that almost everyone has Ninja.

The Prime Movers have admitted that this is one subject that utterly baffles them, and as a result, they do not discuss it.

There are billions of different planets, some with hundreds of different sentient races engaged in almost a trillion different types of society, and almost all of them have produced a form of warrior that is easily recognized as one fitting the "Ninja Template."

Many of these races cannot see eye to eye (literally) on the definition of such basic concepts as Food, Shelter, Sex and Memory, but they all have Ninja.

Sometimes they rule, sometimes they're slaves. Sometimes they're something rare and myth-like from the "Ancient Time of Really Good

Breakfasts," sometimes they have to be swept aside before you can get to your front door. Sometimes they save civilization, and sometimes they destroy it.

But there are things they all have in common:

They are usually very dangerous (at least to other members of their race. The most dangerous P'Thard in the universe will still get stepped on by anything over one meter tall). They are very adept at concealment (It is now known that Ooonge "ninja" were responsible for the destruction of the first seventy five landing parties on their planet, who never realized that they were anything more than just another mountain range.) They possess abilities that are normally not associated with their races (Stlangworz "ninja" have been reported walking and chewing hebz roots at the same time) and they are utterly convinced that theirs is the only true way and that all other "ninja" are incompetent posers.

Because of this they all hate each other. This, galactic ecologists assure us, is what keeps their numbers down to acceptable levels.

Saturday, August 09, 2008

THE HERODOTUS COMPLEX: NOTES BY P'OILGOF LIVY

Chapter 5; Humanity's Best Friends:

The Pogs are a small, studious race of turtle-like beings that quietly evolved on a rather soupy planet somewhere in the constellation of The Southern Cross. They developed a no-nonsense star drive approximately 10,000 years ago and have been members in good standing of the Gallimaufry for at least 9,500 years.

The vast majority of members of the Gallimaufry, once having made the mighty effort to escape their home planets, seem to fall into a dormant period in their history. Despite the access to new races, technologies, and uncounted wonders, they seem content to drift along, assimilating knowledge and experience, until they feel confident enough to more fully assert themselves in galactic society.

Some races never pull out of this period, and have remained quiet background players for millennia, unlike more dynamic races that burst upon the galactic scene, and attempt to found empires, evolve into higher forms, reveal shattering new religious, philosophical, cosmological or mathematical systems or sell something.

Therefore, unlike most of these dynamic young races, they will probably be around for more than a few millennia before being wiped out or forgotten.

The Pogs are a textbook example.

They travel widely, and are familiar features throughout this sector of space. They frequently work in those low-key, clerical jobs that, while still requiring a sentient's touch, usually find that touch belonging to quiet, dull unassuming sentients.

Most xenopsychologists rate them as one of the more stable races, although there was a small faction that said that there were definite signs that as a race they were searching for something. Something that would give them purpose. This opinion was not held by many, until Humanity entered the sphere of the Gallimaufry.

The two races hit it off splendidly.

In the past, there have been several examples of bonds being formed between different races, but, like the Dwoo, who packed up their belongings and actually moved into the Fwogga-Quelm, the vast majority of these have been an establishment of a physical symbiotic, parasitic, predator/prey, or socks-and-shoes type of relationship. The Human/Pog relationship was, instead, a true meeting of minds: an astonishing thing between alien races.

The Pogs had discovered that they liked Humanity's quirky way of living and dealing with the Universe, and the Humans discovered that the Pogs were perfect straight men.

It was a match made in Heaven...

Tuesday, October 21, 2008

THE HERODOTUS COMPLEX: NOTES BY P'OILGOF LIVY

Chapter 6; The Fourth Estate:

In the Prime Mover's comprehensive overview of sentient and semi-sentient life within the sphere of the Gallimaufry: Why We're Better Than All Of You Put Together, there are various appendices which deal with predators that feed upon sentients. Journalists are placed within this category.

Despite extremely bad reviews, these concepts were eventually accepted, and the number of journalists a healthy civilization could support was worked out by the mysterious (and, incidentally, scandal-ridden) Mathemagicians of FftFwand, with a very complex and practically incomprehensible formula involving such things as ergs of information multiplied by the number of stress points divided by the intensity of greed waves generated within a specific civilization, et cetera and so on.

Nobody really understood it, but as it called for the euthanasia of vast herds of journalists, nobody really tried too hard.

When the last editorial writers had been shipped off to the re-cycling vats, it was noticed that things seemed a lot quieter, a lot less tense, and things weren't nearly so bad as people had thought they were. Stress levels went down, and the new system was dubbed a success.

Most planets do quite well with a single journalist. Some of the Hub Worlds found that they required as many as one per economic zone. Occasionally, unscrupulous governments have to be chastised for allowing too many journalists to congregate in one spot. This is foolish, although understandable, as their almost constant internecine squabbles are usually a vast source of amusement for the rest of the populace.

Sometimes a journalist will wish to migrate to a different venue. This is permissible, as long as the journalist already occupying the niche in question is either displaced or disposed of. When the challenge is an amicable one, the two journalists compete to capture the heart of the public by each releasing a series of news stories about the area they wish to control. The incumbent usually has an advantage here, as they "know where all the bodies are buried." The smart journalist usually keeps some juicy scandal buried in their files for just such a challenge. The newcomer, on the other hand, can view the system with fresh, unjailed eyes, and has the additional advantage of being a stranger, and thus a being sentients are still willing to talk to.

These news series are intermittently dumped onto the local infowebs, and the winner is the one who has the least number of "delete" key programs written against them, divided by the number of fresh death threats. In the case of a tie, the rivals sit around a table and attempt to force their opponent to drink themselves to death.

In a hostile takeover, such as in the face of a Hot Story, the newcomer usually just challenges the resident news hawk to a duel to the death, usually by bludgeoning each other with their typewriters. It is interesting to note that as long as the winner registers the kill with the Journalism Guild, most major law enforcement agencies, including the Law Machines, will not treat these killings as murder, but recognize them as a necessary part of the journalist's life-cycle.

Some civilizations have declared all journalists to be vermin and eradicate them whenever possible. This is unwise, both because they serve a legitimate and vital function within the body politic, but also because, when excessively oppressed, journalists tend to become very dangerous.

Saturday, January 03, 2009

THE HERODOTUS COMPLEX: NOTES BY P'OILGOF LIVY

Chapter 7; This Thing Called "Death":

The Sentients of the Gallimaufry have as varied a reaction to the concept of Death as they do to the statement "The Party is Over," and for approximately the same reasons.

The vast majority feel annoyance. They're having a good time. There are still things to ingest, things to experience and sentient who are no doubt just waiting to hear them explain just how very smart they were when they bought into Thulium futures at 417.

A smaller, but still surprisingly large number are just as glad it's all over. The drinks were flat, they never got to do their balancing-a-waffle-iron-on-the-nose trick, and if they have to listen to this moron talk about Thulium Futures for one second more, their heads will explode.

Another segment is just never able to wrap its head around the idea. People come and go, certainly, but where and how are really none of their business, and while it might be troubling that they are running out of people to talk to, they will continue to chatter on (to the hatrack, if they must) until they are forcibly thrown out.

Some are perfectly aware that the party is coming to an end, but know that there will be another party next week and they'll be there to see it. Then there are the few who smile quietly to themselves and take the party with them.

Among those races that do die a Final Death, there is an almost infinite variety of customs surrounding the event, ranging from the perpetual planet wide mourning of the Squeemtoks to the boisterous Cannibalistic Barbecues of Old Terra's Canadians.

A favorite pastime is trying to discover new ways to avoid, circumvent, or redefine death. The most popular are downloading personalities into artificial bodies or clones, replacement of one's corporeal body with one of pure intellect, altering one's rate of travel through the fourth dimension, incorporation into a gestalt group mind, or being granted a wish by the fairies.

Some races don't understand the importance that others place upon corporeal existence, and believe that if a sentient's works (in the form of books, poems, music, films or advertising slogans) continue to exist and still accurately communicate that sentient's ideas to future generations, then the important part of said sentient is immortal and you don't have to actually put up with an actual living, breathing personality that might do embarrassing things like make commercials for wine coolers or write sequels.

Thursday, March 19, 2009

THE HERODOTUS COMPLEX: NOTES BY P'OILGOF LIVY

Chapter 8; Empires within Empires:

The Gallimaufry is only one of a number of trading and communication foci maintained by the Prime Movers. There are almost a hundred such within our galaxy alone.

What makes it rather confusing at first is that these organizations do not have any fixed boundaries and, indeed, there are some trading centers that have dozens of separate trading centers nestled deep within their sphere of influence.

This paradox is resolved when we remember that these are primarily organizations dedicated to promoting communications, and the vast majority of sentients cannot directly communicate with each other. Some species operate on different time lines, or are out of phase with the four dimensions we can perceive, are too small or too large or, if they had to acknowledge us, they would have to kill us. So even when an atomic matrix life form that feeds off the microwave hum left over from the Big Bang and excretes time lines is in the same solar system with your typical silicon-based life form that eats rocks and excretes hydrogen, communication between the two may be close to impossible.

Luckily it's not really a problem, because they usually don't have anything to talk about. Or so it appears, right up until said atomic matrix life form begins a simple operation to make the local sun go nova in order to harvest neutrinos and, to their surprise, are vigorously opposed by those gritty little creatures clinging to the orbiting rocks who have had to start throwing anti-matter around to get their attention. Things usually deteriorate from there. Thus one of the most important functions of the Prime Movers is to coordinate operations between these various races.

This helps prevent unscheduled supernovas, black holes, inversions, atomic shift rifts, shiftspace collapse, chrono-synclastic infundibula and quasars.

Nota Bene:

This is it: the final chapter of the Gallimaufry. we hope you've been enjoying the story! Issue 8 was released in black and white comic book form back in 1998. The last page of Chapter 8 will be posted on June 20. At that point, we will have finished the rather daunting job of coloring it for the Web. (Thanks, Cheyenne! We never thought it would really

happen!) After that, we will begin the preparation of the long-awaited color print collection. We're very excited about that.

Thank you for reading!

Phil & Kaja Foglio

Tuesday, June 23, 2009

This was it: the final chapter of the Gallimaufry. we hope you've enjoyed the story! Issue 8 was released in black and white comic book form back in 1998. We now have the whole thing colored: (Thanks, Cheyenne! We never thought it would really happen!) Once we finish making all the spelling corrections (eek!) we'll be working on putting it all into a book. [Finally, all three Buck Godot collections will be available at once.](#)

Amazing. For those who have asked, yes, we do plan to do a hardcover edition, although we may have to do it through something like lulu.com, since Buck has never been a big commercial success. Oh, well. But we'll get it out there!

If you're wondering what the heck is up with the Winslow, well, you're probably not alone. Winslow is a real stuffed toy that currently lives in a heap of other stuffed toys in one or the other of our children's messy rooms. (He migrates.) Phil drew him into this story, which appeared in one of the [MythAdventures](#) comic books as a special feature (it was in the back to fill up some space. It doesn't actually appear in the Myth book I'm linking to, just so you know. It will be in the Gallimaufry collection.) Later, Winslow became central to the final Buck Godot storyline, which you have, presumably, just finished reading. We hope you get a smile out of this very early work.

Thank you for reading!

Phil & Kaja Foglio

Sunday, November 01, 2009

The following is a paid advertisement, but it was too good not to post as an actual page...and, as one of my friends pointed out, it's the first NEW Buck Godot content in over ten years! Yoicks. So here it is. [There's also a Girl Genius themed one.](#)

About *Buck Godot: zap gun for hire*

Welcome! The Buck Godot comics you'll find here were written and drawn in the 1980's and 1990's. Two print collections are already available: *Buck Godot: zap gun for hire Vol. 1: Four Short Stories* and *Buck Godot: zap gun for hire Vol. 2 PSmIth* can be had from [your local](#)

[book or comic store](#), [Amazon.com](#) or our [Studio Foglio Online Company Store](#).

Buck Godot was written and drawn by Phil Foglio.

Four Short Stories: Various inks and colors by Phil Foglio, Cecilia Cosentini & Julie Sczesny | Edited by Kay Reynolds

PSmIth: Inks by Julie Sczesny | Colors by Phil Foglio & Julie Sczesny | Lettering by Corinna Taylor | Edited by Kay Reynolds

Gallimaufry: Inks by Barb Kaalberg | Colors by Cheyenne Wright | Lettering by Willie Schubert

Thank you for visiting us. We hope you enjoy Buck's adventures!